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New Buffalo Times

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GO BUFFALO...

BISON CELEBRATE WINTERFEST 2025

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PHOTO OF NICKY DURHAM COMPETING IN A WINTERFEST GAME AT THE PEP RALLY BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

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Grand Beach Village Council tables decision on short-term rental ordinance changes

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Members of the Grand Beach Village Council tabled possibly making any of the Planning Commission's recommended changes to the short-term rental (STR) ordinance until next month at their Wednesday, Jan. 15, meeting.

The changes arose from feedback from the community, including over 50 letters, on STRs, Ross Kerr, chair of the Planning Commission, said.

Planners recommended changing the occupancy rule to "align to two adults per bedroom." Kerr said that, when looking at the zoning ordinance and the way the village gives permits as well the way they look at septic and "the impact on infrastructure and footprint of Grand Beach, it's all based on two adults per bedroom." He added that this wouldn't change the "upper bounds of the occupancy limit," which is 16.

Another recommendation was to have some kind of owner occupancy requirements into the STR ordinance, as well as to have them in Exhibit A, which is what people fill out at the beginning of the year to rent.

Also recommended was adding clarifications to the language of sections 6 and 7, which has regulations regarding violations and how they're recorded and reported and officially counted as a strike, that would "effectively make it so that if you do have a violation taking place or receive citation from police automatically counts as a strike" against a property.

Also discussed was the creation of a STR Oversight Committee, which would be "another arm to make sure we're doing the right things to make sure STRs are having the impact we want them to have," creating electronic versions of Exhibits A and B and improving communication with the public on the ordinance's regulations and how they should raise concerns.

Since the Planning Commission's meeting was held six days ago, council members agreed to table approving any changes and to gather more input.

Ed Trainor, chair of the Beach Task Force, presented their recent report, which is available on the village's website.

He said that the task force was created as a result of the Master Plan, which was approved by the council last year.

The report outlines the mission of the task force: to study and make recommendations to make the village's beach/lakefront more consistent and resilient including but not limited to sand replenishment and artificial reefs to retain the sand; to recommend a long-term beach/lakefront plan that can guide current and future councils; to recommend capital projects related to beach/lakefront; to recommend communication protocol to ensure that lakefront property owners are aware of the lake level cycles and to recommend a long-term vision for Grand Beach's lakefront.

Trainor said the report includes recommendations, along with corresponding action steps, such as to immediately implement a Grand Beach specific Beach Nourishment Program, implement a Grand Beach specific Sand Retention Program and to implement a Grand Beach specific Beach/Lakefront Resilience Committee that would "manage and monitor not only the lakefront but the communication of it."

Councilmembers approved the report, which marked the dissolution of the task force and that the next step be the creation of the Beach/Lakefront Resilience Committee.

Councilmember Jack Grace, who serves the golf and pro shop commissioner, gave a report on another unfunded project, the golf course irrigation system.

Currently, the council is working on a survey to determine support for several major projects in the village.

The current system is approximately 45 years old and, when first installed, was expected to last 20-30 years.

Between 2023-2024, Grace said over 300 labor hours were spent "repairing and replacing irrigation components at times to having to manually operate the systems themselves."

Between labor and materials, the village has spent over $40,000. A new system would be a 50-year investment, as new technology, piping and heads are built to last longer.

Currently, there's one sprinkler line running down the middle of each fairway, with the heads spraying approximately 70-90 feet.

"In this current system, we are missing 25-35 percent of the fairway itself and almost 100 percent of the rough areas," Grace said.

A new system, which was designed by golf division manager Jim Held, would consist of two lines running down each fairway, with three lines on 6, 8 and 9, which would allow water to "reach 100 percent of the fairway and a good amount of the rough. Grace said that new technology would also "allow better coverage, including distance and spray patterns, as well as save the village 30-40 percent of electricity."

Three companies are currently out for bid, with Grace saying that contractors prefer to do the project at once. The project would be a 60–90-day installation, with all nine holes open on most construction days.

The project could be funded through a golf millage; a special assessment; grants, which Grace and Clay Putnam of Serviscape are researching or donations and fundraising.

Councilmembers approved purchasing microphones/speakers for council meetings for $655.

Councilmembers approved paying $9,000 to C and E Construction with regards to the reconfiguration of the council room to add more storage space.

A public hearing is scheduled for the Planning Commission meeting at 6 p.m. Feb. 6 regarding the final site plan for The Haven, a proposed site condominium.

A special council meeting to review the Capital Improvement Plan is scheduled for 1 p.m. Friday, Feb. 7.

A plaque listing the following donors for the outdoor patio furniture that was purchased last year will be hung in the Village Hall: The Cooney Family, Bill and Gail Malone, Mike Elliot, Diane Cody and family, David Manecke, The Stewart Family, Ross and Erin Kerr, Chip and Cindy Moore, Connie Kenny Sulivan, Ladies Golf Champion 1995,1997 and 2007, In memory of Peter Sonderby, The Ben Kitterman family, Molly Newell, David Reahl and Nate Casale, Nancy Trainor.

I live on page 3. *— Dino N. Fatouros*

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

CITY OF NEW BUFFALO
VANCE PRINCE, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
MARK ROBERTSON, ROGER LIJEWSKI, KAREN GEAR, RICH KNOLL, VANCE PRICE
City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
HOWARD MALES, MICHELLE HEIT, MICHELLE HANNON, PATTY IAZZETTO, BARBARA ANDERSON
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
Sheriff, Chuck Heit
Undersheriff, Greg Sanders
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 10AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, JENNIFER SUMMERS, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, ARTHUR ANDERSON
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM
VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 5PM EST
KIMBERLY WOLNIK, CLERK-TREASURER
HARRY WALDER, JACK GRACE, ED SEBASTIAN, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES
MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

City Council plans new projects for 2025

BY THERESE DONNELLY

For their first meeting of 2025, the New Buffalo City Council began planning for several upcoming projects.

Normally scheduled for the third Monday of the month, the meeting was postponed until Wednesday, Jan. 22, due to Martin Luther King Day, and the subzero temperatures that hit the area early in the week.

As the first order of new business, City Manager Darwin Watson presented the council with a proposal to adopt a cost-sharing plan for city employee health insurance. The approved plan will split insurance costs, with the city paying 80 percent and employees paying 20 percent.

State law requires public employers to provide a cost-sharing model, and non-compliance can result in sanctions.

The council also passed a poverty exemption resolution to provide exemptions on property tax. In order to qualify for an exemption, applicants must own and occupy the property as a principal residence, and meet income guidelines and an asset level test.

New Buffalo's Board of Review will meet three times in 2025, with a March meeting to review annual assessment rolls and hear appeals, and July and December meetings to correct any clerical errors associated with the assessments. The council approved alternate dates for the July and December meetings. Alternate dates are set so assessors who serve multiple areas can be available to hear any requests.

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The US Army Corps of Engineers has informed the city it will include the federal channel at the mouth of the Galien River in its 2025 dredging work. This work is scheduled for August, the height of boating season in New Buffalo, and does not dredge portions of the harbor outside of the channel.

Watson told the council that, in order to avoid congestion and high costs, he recommended a contract with Donkersloot and Sons to dredge areas of higher accumulation ahead of the USACE's schedule in order to minimize costs to the city and interruptions to boating traffic.

Donkersloot quoted $17,300, but the overall mild winter has left the waterways without a protective layer of ice until mid-January, so Watson recommended the council approve a cost not to exceed $24,500.

In 2021, the city leased four vehicles through the state Enterprise program. The city has already purchased one of the vehicles, and Watson recommended purchasing the other three-two 2021 Ford F150s and a 2020 Dodge Durango-for a total of $42,322.28.

The city had leased the vehicles with the intention of returning them after the first year, but the pandemic's impact on the automotive industry, and fewer municipal discounts through leasing programs meant this was no longer financially sound, Watson explained.

Police Chief Rich Killips added that the vehicles' current trade-in values would not cover the costs of purchasing replacements.

The council approved the purchase.

The council voted not to pass a resolution to request the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) conduct a traffic study on US 12 between Red Arrow Highway and the Indiana state line. Watson said the study would assess the safety of non-motorized traffic along the Marquette Greenway, and the effect of increased business along the corridor. While the council agreed that safety along the highway was important, not all felt the study would focus on that.

Councilmember Mark Robertson said the city had not requested the study and MDOT was using the study to create a "road diet" along the highway, reducing the number of lanes on the highway. He pointed out MDOT had previously attempted a similar diet leading into New Buffalo, which he described as "a disaster."

Councilmember Roger Lijewski agreed, pointing out the road in question is the emergency route for Interstate 94 and shifting semis and summer traffic loads to one lane would cause backups and difficulties for first responders.

"It's dangerous out there, why would you shrink it?" he asked.

The great city is that which has the greatest man or woman: if it be a few ragged huts, it is still the greatest city in the whole world. — *Walt Whitman*

Councilmember Rich Knoll agreed that the previous diet caused problems, and a new lane reduction would be unsafe in summer months.

Mayor Vance Price said the city would not be obligated to follow any recommendations MDOT proposed based on the study and information could help with plans to connect the Greenway with the Red Arrow Linear Path.

Price cast the dissenting vote when the council did not support the study.

The city's contract with Gabridge & Co to provide auditing services expired in 2024 and Watson said a request for proposals had resulted in proposals from several auditing firms. On Watson's recommendation, the council approved the proposal from Lauterbach & Amen for a three-year contract. Watson said other municipalities who work with the firm have recommended them.

Robertson thanked Gabridge & Co for their previous service to the city.

On Watson's recommendation, the council approved a proposal from Abonmarche Engineers to act as the engineers of record for the city. The firm has provided engineering services for years. Under the proposal, Abonmarche perform smaller projects not to exceed $10,000 without prior approval from the City Manager. Any larger projects would require a separate agreement.

Tony McGhee, who previously acted as the city's main contact with Abonmarche, recently left the firm to accept the position of city manager of Buchanan and Watson said for now various project managers will be in communication with the city as needed.

The council also approved a resolution of support and a commitment to match funding for the South Whittaker Street RAP Grant application. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) program provides grants for redevelopment projects including infrastructure development and real estate rehabilitation.

As part of the resolution, the city commits to providing matching funds totaling $416,406.25, which Watson said could come from various sources, including municipal funds or other grants.

Councilmembers received copies of the 2025 Planning Commission's annual report, but no action was required.

Property owners at 917 W. Clay have requested the city vacate a platted portion of Clay Street between Eagle and Monroe streets. Watson explained this would hamper the city's ability to lay utilities if further development occurred. He instead recommended the owners be granted access that would allow them to make improvements within City specifications while allowing the city to retain the right of way. The council agreed with Watson's suggestion, but no vote was required.

Prior to adjournment, the council agreed there is a need for more authority to enforce beach safety in the busy summer months, and a need for more parking and clearer markings in no-parking areas.

Price reminded residents the Facebook page "New Buffalo, Michigan (Official)" is not a city site, and recommended visiting the city's webpage for updates or to sign up to receive emails.

The city's leaf vacuum was replaced late fall 2024 and Price suggested increased communication to let residents know what can and cannot be left at curbsides for leaf pickup to avoid excessive wear and damage on the new equipment.

Watson announced the City Assessor Shalice Northrop had received an award from the Treasury Department for her work.

Price said he had received questions from several people regarding the restrooms at Oselka Park. He said the facilities are closed for the winter months and will reopen in spring.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE New Buffalo Times — SINCE 1942 —

The Boreal Forest

OPINIONS

GLOBAL OPINIONS ON THE DANGERS OF ASSOCIATING WITH "FRIENDS"

OPINION BY DINO N. FATOUROS

Why do you worry about troubles which may visit you, but may never arrive? I mean your plane crashes or a tree falls on you on your walk or any other misfortune rather than plots against you.

Instead beware and steer clear of those that watch your actions and reach out against you. Losses from misfortune may be heavy but it's from your associations that a man's everyday danger moves nearer. Prepare yourself against that; give yourself the optionality to Trust later? There is no evil more frequent, persistent and manipulative than that that comes from your fellow-man. Even a tree falling gives warning but damage from your "friends" is instantaneous and the closer it gets to you the more carefully it is concealed from notice.

You are mistaken to trust the smile and appearance of those you meet. The deceitful have the appearance of goodness, but the soul of evil. They practice pleasing people in order to have the opportunities to ruin man.

You must think what dangers your fellow-man can do when you share your feelings, thoughts, and plans. In your dealings with others, do not harm, in order that you may reduce the chance of being harmed. You should be happy with your "friends" accomplishments and be empathetic with their losses, staying conscious of what you should say and not say. History repeatedly shows the losses that man experiences when speaking and acting carelessly. What do you gain by not sharing all your feelings? Not freedom from Harm but freedom from treachery.

People often come into harm when desiring the same successes. Love your own continuous self-improvements and don't speak on others need to improve. Cheers.

To Your Health

COLUMN BY KAREN EDWARDS ND

ELECTROLYTES - THE SPARK OF LIFE

Electrolytes are electrically charged minerals that help the heart generate electrical signals to contract and relax the muscle and regulate blood pressure. They alsoregulate nerve and muscle function, hydrate the body, balance acidity and help rebuild damaged tissue. What is the first thing they do when you go to the hospital? They hook you up to an IV. They are infusing you withelectrolytes. We cannot survive without them.

Electrolyte disorders and imbalances can become life threatening. Symptoms include severe muscle cramping, cardiac arrest, seizures and coma. Main examples of electrolytes are Potassium, sodium, calcium and magnesium. These minerals are what give you the spark of life.

You lose electrolytes when you have a fever and sweat or when you have diarrhea and are throwing up. You can see why people suffering the flu is at high risk for serious loss. Keeping your body loaded with necessary electrolytes is really pretty easy. We all know bananas contain a large amount of potassium, but you need all the electrolyte minerals in balance, so you also need a variety of other fruits and vegetables too. All leafy greens are filled with electrolytes as well as beans, nuts seeds,legumes and herbs. Dried figs, apricots, prunes and dates.Coconut water is filled with a balance of natural electrolytes by itself. If you are lucky enough to know someone who taps maple trees for syrup, ask to buy some of the water. It is an amazing source of electrolytes. Staying hydrated keeps electrolytes suspended. Being dehydrated is the quickest way to lose electrolytes. It all comes down to eating healthy and maintaining balance in your diet.

Most of you have heard of electrolytes because of the sports drink Gatorade. However, that is one of the least healthy ways to receive them. Gatorade is also full of sugar, dyes and chemicals.

I share this 200-year-old Switchel recipe with my patients. Also called Haymaker's punch. Having this made up in your refrigerator when you are sick with fever and diarrhea may save you from going to the hospital for dehydration. You can live without food when you are sick, but you have to maintain an electrolyte balance for your body systems to function. This is the easy and tasty way.

Switchel is also a great drink after exercising and sweating. It is a life saver and refreshing in the summer when you are out sweating and losing these minerals quickly. (Hence the nickname Haymakers Punch.) I have seen too many people have "Heat stroke" because ofelectrolyte mineral loss. Drinking this regularly when you are out working in the heat can save that 911 call and chronic damage to your organs. This is a powerhouse electrolyte drink. It also eases inflammation, benefits digestion and is full of probiotics.

This makes one quart. In a mason jar add 2 Tablespoons powdered Ginger, 3 Tablespoons Sorghumor Blackstrap Molasses, 2 Tablespoons Raw Apple Cider Vinegar, and ½ teaspoon Redmond real salt or pink Himalayan salt. Fill the rest of the jar with room temperature water. Shake well and drink throughout the day or refrigerate.

Disclaimer: Nothing in these articles is meant to replace medical advice. If you are on medications, do not stop taking them. This is for educational purposes.

Karen Edwards is a board-Certified Dr. of Naturopathy, Master Herbalist, Vegan and Raw food Chef. She is owner of Holistic Alternatives in New Buffalo and La Porte for over 25 years.

New Buffalo Township Board adopts resolution amending marijuana ordinance

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Members of the New Buffalo Township Board adopted a resolution that adopts an Ordinance 20250121 amending Chapter 257 of the marijuana ordinance to prohibit new medical marijuana facilities and adult use establishments at their Tuesday, Jan. 21, meeting.

New Buffalo Township Supervisor Michelle Heit said that the change prohibits new establishments and doesn't apply to any applications, "preliminary SLUs and so on" that were submitted by June 3, 2024, which was the deadline to supplement any applications that were deemed incomplete as part of the moratorium that went into effect last year.

During public comments, Jerry Looney said that, with the township accepting marijuana establishment applications, he sold property and had another one "in the works" when it came to his attention that that person kept wanting extensions.

While he said that he's fine with this the SLU doesn't stay with the property and now that person has "ghosted" him.

Looney said that he can't "apply or sell" the property to anyone else for marijuana use not only because of the moratorium but also because the SLU is in the name of the person and not in the property's name

Looney said he's requesting the board take another look at the ordinance.

"I don't believe that's the way it should be, but I guess that's the way the ordinance reads...I think it's the wrong intentions on what the SLU should've been, and I think it should stay with the property," he said, adding that he also had a signed contract and that all contingencies were released.

Christine Jaber, who was there with the landowner of a property on U.S. 12, said that there have been "many requests for a text ordinance change because the ZBA said the SLU runs with the land or someone who has interest in the land."

"The landowner also can petition, the landowner also has rights to the land because he has a possessory interest rather than someone that doesn't have a lease or is in breach of a lease or contract," she said.

She added that she and the landowner have "also been requesting an amendment to this because it's not reflecting the law."

Heit said that, once final approval for an SLU is given, "it does run with the property."

She added that those who were speaking that day had preliminary approvals. The township is considering some amendments to the existing marijuana ordinance with regards to preliminary approvals, adding that there was some confusion in that area when the township started the process.

Board members approved granting a six -month extension of preliminary approval of an SLU to Rapid Fish LLC, located at 19169 U.S. 12 until Sept. 18.

Final approval of an SLU to Stash Ventures LLC to operate an adult use marijuana establishment at 19615 U.S. 12 was granted.

Preliminary approval of an SLU to New Buffalo Investments, LLC to operate an adult use marijuana establishment at 10309 U.S. 12 was granted.

A step increase to the deputy clerk, which increases the monthly stipend to $700, was approved.

The first change order for the water meter replacement project from BNZ in the amount of $26,145 for the replacement of four water lines was approved. Heit said that meters are being moved out of some homes in some neighborhoods and that, in doing so, some galvanized water lines were identified that need to be replaced.

A proposal from Wightman for $32,000 to do a feasibility study for potential improvements to the Fire Station One/water building on Clay Street was approved.

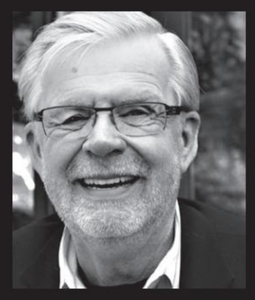
A resolution requesting a traffic study from MDOT for the township's portion on U.S. 12 from Red Arrow Highway to the state line was adopted. Heit said the study will identify traffic changes due to the dispensaries going up down there and help them make an "informed decision" regarding a stoplight at the Village of Grand Beach, which is being requested. The New Buffalo City Council will be considering a resolution as well, as a portion of the highway run through the city.

The second pay estimate in the amount of $109,789.40 to PayJay Inc. for the U.S.12 water and sewer project was approved.

SPORTS

From the Bleachers

COLUMN BY KURT MARGGRAF IN CHICAGO



Bob Uecker passed away Thursday at the age of 90.

Bob was a major league catcher, but not a very good one. After his playing career ended, he became a longtime broadcaster for the Milwaukee Brewers. Bob was also an actor, appearing in Mr. Belvedere and Major League. The primary reason for Bobs fame was his sense of humor. He had a quick mind and his sense of humor was very dry. He was Johnny Carson's favorite guest. R.I.P. Mr Uecker.

The Cub convention took place last weekend and Sammy Sosa was back on board. Sammy finally apologized for anything he may have done or said that cast a bad light on the Cubs and the Ricketts family accepted him back. Sammy was an important player back in the steroid era and he made things exciting on the north side. I'm happy he's back.

The NFL playoffs have been very exciting. The four weekend games left four teams standing. On Saturday, the defending champion Kansas City Chiefs beat the surprisingly competitive Houston Texans, and then the Washington Commanders pulled off a huge upset by beating the Detroit Lions. Sunday saw the Philadelphia Eagles hold off the Los Angeles Rams and the Buffalo Bills get by the Baltimore Ravens. All of the games were hard fought and competitive. Next weeks winners will play each other in the Super Bowl. Washington versus Philadelphia and Buffalo versus Kansas City. The games should be great, as should the Super Bowl. I think it would be fun if Washington played Buffalo for the championship.

The biggest game of the weekend is for the collegiate national championship. Notre Dame is playing Ohio State in what figures to be a great battle. I believe this will be the first time that two midwestern teams have played each other for the crown since the playoff system began in college football, and who better than Notre Dame and Ohio State, two perennial powerhouses. The local angle adds a lot of interest to the game with Notre Dame being only 35 miles from New Buffalo. The southwest side of Chicago has a catholic high school that is contributing three players to the big game. Notre Dames center, Pat Coogan, is a product of Marist high school. He's been a big fan of Notre Dame since he was a little kid. As a matter of fact, Pat lost his starting position but didn't transfer to another school due to his love of Notre Dame. Pat regained his starting position and has become a spiritual leader on the team. He's an important cog in Notre Dame's offense. Two other young men, now playing for Ohio State went to Marist also. Wide receiver Carnell Tate is a key wide receiver and wide receiver Nolan Baudo is currently a backup. Ohio State is a touchdown favorite, but don't be surprised if Notre Dame pulls off an upset.

Ernest Hemingway said "In order to write about life first you must live it."

Be kind. Talk to you next week. Peace, love, and happiness.

UPDATE !!! A couple of very important things have happened since I submitted my column Sunday night. Monday afternoon the Bears announced the signing of the most sought after coach available. Ben Johnson, the imaginative offensive coordinator of the Detroit Lions, will be the head coach of the Bears next season and hopefully for years and years. He appears to be the perfect hire and should help Caleb Williams reach his potential. This is a huge upgrade for the Bears and they will surely be a much improved team next season. The Bears, and their fans, are ecstatic about the hire.

Monday night, Notre Dame jumped out to a quick 7-0 lead, but then Ohio State took control. The fighting Irish came back and made it a close game but couldn't catch Ohio State. Both teams played great games and the people in the bar/restaurant I watched the game in were on the edge of their stools all night. Both coaches accounted themselves well and although the game was hard fought, everyone displayed good sportsmanship. It certainly was an eventful day.

I pride myself on respecting my colleagues. *— Stephen A. Smith*

Knights of Columbus announces free throw competition winners

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Military recruiter charged with having sex with prospective recruitee

BY STAN MADDUX

A recruiter for the U.S. Marines in La Porte could face prison time for allegedly having sex with a high school student expressing an interest in joining the armed forces.

Daniel Escobar, 27, is charged in La Porte Circuit Court with two counts of Level 5 felony child seduction.

According to court documents, La Porte Police became involved on January 9 when contacted by her parents after they discovered the alleged sexual relationship.

Her father gave one of the investigators his 17 year old daughter's cellphone, which contained text messages revealing plans by the girl and Escobar to meet at his recruitment office at 614 Andrew Ave. on La Porte's west side, police said.

When questioned the next day, the girl told police Escobar is a recruiter at her school and she met him at his office on December 19 to get information about the military, according to court documents.

During the same visit, the girl said she ended up taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test, according to court documents,

The test administered by the U.S. Department of Defense measures a person's aptitude and potential for military service and other careers.

Later, at some point, the girl said Escobar invited her to go to a gym with other people from the recruitment office.

From then on, the girl said their conservations became increasingly "intense" leading them to plan on having sex, according to court documents.

Police said each of the two alleged sexual encounters that occurred later happened at his office on consecutive days.

The investigation also revealed Escobar gave the girl his debit card, which she used to purchase birth control pills at a local pharmacy along with protein shakes for them to share, court documents revealed.

Escobar on January 17 was located at Michigan City High School and transported to the La Porte Police Department.

After advised of his rights, police said Escobar asked to speak to an attorney prior to questioning and was taken into custody without being interviewed by investigators.

Escobar was still being held Wednesday in the La Porte County Jail on $15,000 bond.

He's scheduled to appear for his initial court hearing on Friday.

In Indiana, the legal age of consent for having sex is 16.

However, the crime of child seduction applies when an adult sexual partner of someone ages 16 or 17 is in a position of authority or influence over the minor under state law.

Escobar could face anywhere from a one to six year sentence on each count.

Overnight shelter opens in La Porte

BY STAN MADDUX

In response to the recent bitter cold temperatures, a homeless shelter has opened in La Porte to provide daily overnight stays until spring.

People at the shelter also receive help with trying to find new housing and remove other barriers keeping them on the streets.

The shelter at the old downtown train depot along the Norfolk Southern tracks on Washington St. was born from a partnership between the city, the Center Township Trustee's Office and Nest Community Shelter in Michigan City.

"We know the need that's out there," said Harrison Holtkamp, Executive Director of the Michigan City shelter operating since 2001.

Holtkamp said three people, including an elderly woman living out of her car for the past several months, stayed at the shelter when it first opened Sunday night.

Six people stayed the following night.

Holtkamp said he expects more people to show up once word spreads further about the shelter open seven days a week from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. until March 31.

The shelter run strictly by volunteers and monetary donations provides four inch thick mats on the floor to sleep along with sheets, blankets and pillows.

Dinner and breakfast are also served.

The next day, guests are directed to the Center Township Trustee's Office along Indiana 2 on La Porte's west side.

Township Trustee Lisa Pierzakowski said the needs of each person are reviewed to determine the best process to follow for finding them housing and meet other needs in areas like employment, mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Pierzakowski said shelter guests are also welcome to use the facilities at her office for taking a hot shower, doing their laundry and have lunch before heading back to the shelter for the night.

"We can get people out of the elements and into a shelter and, hopefully, get them back on their feet. That's our goal," she said.

"Whatever they need to be successful, we want to make that happen," said La Porte Mayor Tom Dermody.

Holtkamp said representatives from Nest Community Shelter are also going to the shelter in La Porte to help with case management.

"We just want to help anybody who's street bound to get out of the streets and guide them to services to help them out," he said.

Holtkamp said the Michigan City shelter open year round has an average overnight attendance of 35 people.

Since the artic outbreak, he said the facility at 1001 W. 8th St. has been at near capacity, which is 50 people.

Holtkamp said the average stay by each person at his shelter, which also relies heavily on volunteers and donations, is 44 days.

"The shelter is not a forever home. It's very temporary but it's here to help individuals," he said.

Holtkamp said the rise in the cost of living in recent years is more of a factor now in people becoming homeless and has made it more challenging to get them back on their feet.

For some people, Pierzakowski said being without a home is just a missed paycheck away or a circumstance beyond their control.

"It could be somebody who gets sick. It could be somebody who's lost their spouse. Homeless is not always about what everybody thinks it is," she said.

Holtkamp said the long term future of the shelter in La Porte is not known but he expects those discussions to be held at some point.

He said many of the people using the shelter in Michigan City are from La Porte.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE
New Buffalo Times
— SINCE 1942 —

THE LAKESIDE ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES 2025 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Applications are open for The Lakeside Association scholarships.

Seniors graduating from River Valley High School, home schooled seniors and seniors who live in River Valley School District but are "school of choice" elsewhere are welcome to apply. The recipient must attend a college/university or an accredited training/vocational program. Scholarships are based on academic performance, community involvement extracurricular activities (school clubs, athletics and music, theater), work experience and future goals.

A minimum of three scholarships will be awarded for a total minimum of $5,000. Please contact Stacey Vetter at svetter@rivervalleyschools.org at River Valley High School for an application. Applications are due Feb. 21.

The Lakeside Association is a volunteer organization based in Lakeside, Michigan, with a mission to "Build Community for Lakeside and Our Neighbors." Through events, gifts, projects and advocacy, the Association aims to bring value and meaning to the residents with initiatives that "Connect, Preserve and Celebrate." A hallmark activity of the Association is the annual gifting of scholarships for local high school students pursuing a college degree or vocational certification. — STAFF REPORTS

BCYF market beef, carcass class registration deadline approaching

Market beef and carcass class registration for the 2025 Berrien County Youth Fair is underway.

Registrations must be received at the fair office by Saturday, Feb. 1. Exhibitors must be at least 5 years old to show animals at the 2025 fair. Berrien County youth between the ages of 5 and 20, as of Jan. 1, 2025, may register their market beef animals in person at the fair office, by mail or online.

All beef and dairy animals must have a Radio Frequency Electronic Identification (RFID) tag number listed on the exhibitor entry form, which is issued by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and can be obtained by calling 800-292-3939 or on-line at www.michigan.gov/mdard.

Completed registration forms may be dropped off at the fair office (Monday - Friday between the hours of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.), mailed to the fair office (Berrien County Youth Fair, P. O. Box 7, Berrien Springs, MI 49103), placed in the drop box located near the entrance to the fair office or completed online at www.bcyf.org by midnight Feb. 1.

Information necessary to register a market beef animal includes name of exhibitor, exhibitor number, RFID number, address, telephone number, address where animal is housed, department, division and class number and breed(s) to be registered. Market beef classes consist of: Shorthorn, Hereford, Angus, Simmental, Chianina, Dairy, Market Heifer and Crossbred. Class numbers are available on BCYF website (www.bcyf.org). Animals must be entered in the correct class at the time of weigh-in. Market beef animals that are tagged on weigh-in day can only be exhibited by the exhibitor that registered that animal. If more than one animal is registered by members of the same family, a family backup can be designated at weigh-in. There will be no changes allowed amongst siblings on entry day.

Each exhibitor may register four animals, but only two animals may be exhibited at the 2025 Berrien County Youth Fair, which will take place Aug. 11-16. All market beef that is registered to come to the fair must be brought to the fairgrounds to be ear-tagged and weighed from 8-11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 15, at the beef barns, Buildings 53 and 52.

For more information, visit www.bcyf.org. — STAFF REPORTS

Franklin Street bridge undergoing repairs

BY STAN MADDUX

The historic Franklin Street draw bridge at Michigan City's lakefront is now closed for the next few months.

The bridge is undergoing just over $1.3 million in repairs.

Project Manager Andy Skwiat said there will be no motor vehicle or pedestrian traffic allowed on the bridge until the repairs are finished.

The goal is to complete the work by March 15.

"If the weather cooperates and the work goes well, we might be able to get it open before then," Skwiat said.

Skwiat said the bridge was closed Thursday, Jan. 16.

Barricades along with chain link fencing were put up to make sure no vehicles or pedestrians can navigate across the century old span, which raises to allow sailboats with high masts on Trail Creek to pass underneath it during the warm weather months.

Skwiat said some of the work involves replacing metal beams and new welding in spots where the old welding has cracked.

La Porte County government, which owns and operates the bridge, has spent several million dollars over the past few years on rehabilitating it.

The work, instead of being done all at once, has been conducted in phases during the winter so the bridge providing access to Lake Michigan can reopen to accommodate the busy summer lakefront travel season.

Skwiat said he expects the bridge to be fully restored within "another year or two. It'll be a very nice structure for its age," he said.

Student Senate members gather at the Winterfest game

Students compete in a variety of games at Friday's pep rally

The male half of the student population participates in a volleyball game

Winterfest Kings M'nason Smothers and Erick Gaeta with (center) Queen Nicky Durham

The Bison face off against Countryside Friday night

Student representatives gather at Friday's game

Students compete during games at Friday's pep rally

The Bison mascot leads the band down the high school hallway

Students compete at games during the pep rally

Bison celebrate Winterfest 2025

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Social media was well represented during this year's Bison Winterfest Week, which took place Sunday through Friday, Jan. 12-17.

The following were the winners of this year's wall contest, which consisted of each class decorating a wall in the gym to represent a social media platform: first place, the seniors for their Instagram wall; second place, freshmen for their YouTube wall; third place, the juniors for their Tik Tok wall and fourth place, the sophomores for their Snapchat wall.

Winners of this year's overall Winterfest Spirit Week, during which students competed in games and dressed for themed days, are as follows: first place, seniors; second place, juniors; third place, freshmen and fourth place, sophomores.

The weeklong festivities culminated with Friday's game, when the Bison

faced off against Countryside Academy and seniors M'nason Smothers and Erik Gaetawere crowned Winerfest Kings and Nicky Durham was crowned Winterfest Queen. Also on the Winterfest Court were Eva Bauer, Xochitl Hernandez and Vaughn Nikkel. The following were student representatives: Leo Lemieux, Colten Lijewski and Carlee Tanksley, freshmen; Adamary Cardenas, Layne Collins and Lydia Denham, sophomores and Nick Haskins, Bianca Ilescas-Villa and David Sheldon, juniors.

The high school band plays at Friday's game

The male half of the population competes at volleyball

The Bison mascot visits with elementary students at the pep rally

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Attempt to unfreeze water pipe leads to house fire

BY STAN MADDUX

A man using a blow torch to try and thaw a frozen water pipe caught his house on fire Tuesday night outside La Porte.

Emergency responders about 7 p.m. were called to 115 Maple Drive on the Island of Pine Lake.

The homeowner, Donald Boody, 81, told investigators he was using a blow torch on a water faucet on the outside of the home when the material underneath the aluminum siding caught fire, according to La Porte County Police.

Center Township Fire Captain Eric Haverstock said the flames started moving up the outside wall, but the man was able to put out most of the flames.

Haverstock said firefighters extinguished the rest of the fire and removed several panels of aluminum siding to make sure there were no remaining hot spots inside the wall.

According to police, there was moderate damage to the outside wall and minimal damage to the inside of the residence.

Boody was able to continue living at the residence.

Haverstock said the brutally cold temperatures would have been more of an issue had the fire required more time and water to extinguish.

He said Boody was trying to unfreeze a pipe in the basement that provides water throughout the single story home.

Naked driver in crash accused of stealing car

BY STAN MADDUX

A naked La Porte County woman is accused of stealing a car and crashing the vehicle into a tree.

Michelle Reeves, 37, is charged in La Porte Circuit Court with four counts, including Level 6 felony auto theft and Class C misdemeanor public nudity.

According to court documents, on Jan. 19, Reeves walked out of a home with no clothing on and took off in a 2007 BMW that was idling in a driveway across the street near Kingsbury.

Moments later, police said the woman crashed into a tree head-on and was completely naked when she walked up to the front door of a nearby home.

The homeowner invited Reeves inside and gave her a blanket to cover herself and keep warm.

According to court documents, Reeves suddenly got up off the couch and walked into the bathroom to take a shower.

An officer soon arrived to find the bathroom door locked.

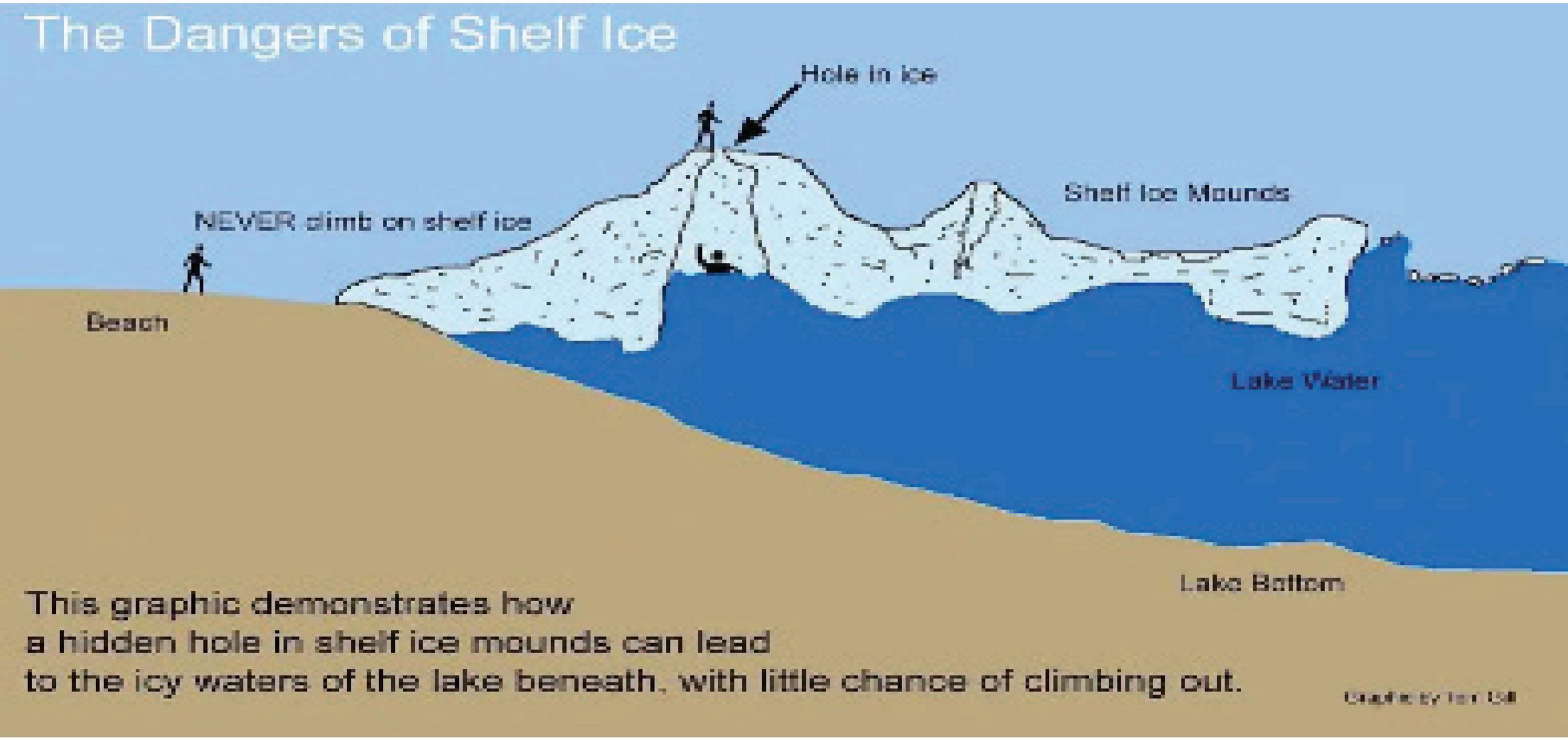
In response to his commands, Reeves stepped out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel, according to court documents.

Police said she was bleeding from an abrasion on her wrist and cut on her big toe.

Reeves was given some clothes to wear by the homeowner before being transported to the La Porte County Jail.

According to police, investigators were waiting for the results of a blood test to determine if she was under the influence of any narcotics.

Just a trace of alcohol was found in her system, police said.



This graphic demonstrates how a hidden hole in shelf ice mounds can lead to the icy waters of the lake beneath, with little chance of climbing out.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ANNOUNCES FREE THROW COMPETITION WINNERS

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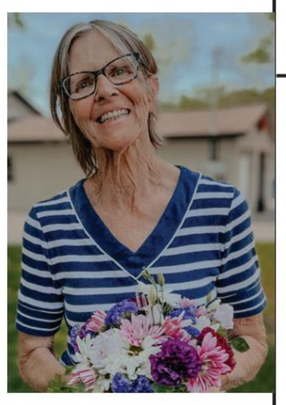
OBITUARIES

Ann Shirley Dawson
1952-2025



Ann Shirley Dawson, 72, of Lakeside, passed, Friday, January 10, 2025.

Her life began May 12, 1952 in Michigan City, Indiana, the youngest of six children born to Giovanni and Antonia DeTomasi. She first married David Trumps in 1969 in Three Oaks, Michigan. After four years of marriage, he preceded her in death. She then married Thomas Dawson in 1976 in Lakeside, Michigan. After thirty-eight years of marriage, he also preceded her in death in 2014.

Ann Dawson deserves a book written about her. Her strength, bravery, love, resilience. Though tragedies have touched her life, Ann chose to endure each negative with ferocious perseverance. Even in the bad, there was so much good. She did so much for others. Ann took on the role of caregiver to those who needed her, always willing to lend a hand. She was outstanding member to her community. Ann was gracious and selfless time and time again.

She loved bowling, The Wizard of Oz, bunnies, the color blue, but most of all her family - and that will be her legacy; unending dedication and love for her people. Ann's memory will live on through the countless lives she uplifted and the lasting impact she made.

Ann will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by two daughters, Heather (Keith) Shimanek of Niles, Holly (David) Healey of Chicago, Illinois; one son, Joel Dawson of Sawyer; grandchildren, Becky, Rian, Naomi, Charles, Amber, Eric, Chucky, Matthew, Patrick, Michael, Hannah, Mitchel, Griffin, Jack, Austin, Zoë, Gio; twenty-four great grandchildren; three great-great grandchildren; one sister, Arlene Reed of Tennessee; two brothers, Jerry DeTomasi of Florida, Jack (Clareann) DeTomasi of Three Oaks; two step-daughters, Debbie (David) Bronson of Florida, Robin Brock of Grand Rapids;

special family members, Kevin Sherbit of Benton Harbor, Amy (Buck) Rochefort of Three Oaks, John Smith of Jackson, Kelly Garrett of Elkhart, Indiana, Jude, Noa; and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her beloved first husband; her beloved second husband; one sister, Pat Keltner; one brother, James DeTomasi; two step-sons, Kenneth Dawson, Charles Dawson.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Ann's life from 12:00 noon, Eastern Standard Time until 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Saturday, January 25, 2025, in Peat's Cider Social, 6201 Red Arrow Highway, Stevensville, Michigan 49127.

Ann will be laid to rest beside her husband, Thomas, in Lakeside Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Ann be made to Caring Circle Hospice, 4025 Health Park Lane, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

A Writer's Life...
DURING THE GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION ANIMATION

BY JACK OLESKER

The Great and Powerful Wizardess of CBS...

You would think we were approaching CIA Headquarters at Langley. Andy gives his name to the guard at the guardhouse. The guard gives Andy a pass card for his dashboard. We park and I follow Andy toward the entrance to CBS' headquarters.

Entrance doors open and we walk inside. Suddenly I feel zero nervousness. Suddenly I feel like I've grown five inches taller and packed on 20 pounds of musclemass, my biceps and pecs bulging.

As Andy and I walk along the corridors of power leading to the executive offices, I think about how this is exactly what I want. Well, maybe not 'exactly'. I never thought I'd end up writing for children's television. But television and motion pictures is where I wanted to be and I'm proud of what I've achieved and that I'm at where I'm at.

The receptionist says hello to Andy and as he smiles and returns her greeting I think how cool it is that she knows him on sight.

A set of glass doors part and Judy Price's secretary says hi to Andy. Really cool, I think. She presses a button on her intercom. In that instant I know exactly how the meeting is going to go down. I could have scripted it. I was born for this moment.

The secretary opens the door, we walk into the office. Judy Price stands, spreads her arms held out wide toward me, a big smile on her face as she declares, "Jackie-poo!!!"

I smile back. Yeah. I could have scripted this...

To put it into context, you have to understand where DIC Entertainment was at during this time. Jean Chalopin has some successes in Europe. But America isn't Europe. He's an outsider and one with a thick French accent. He's charming and handsome, but still 'a foreigner', unfamiliar with the American market which is where Andy comes in. And there is a lot of competition from other small independent studios who desperately want to create series that will be ordained for production and broadcast by one of the trinity – CBS, NBC and ABC.

Jean and Andy have given birth to their small studio and, incredibly, they have a network series airing that could give their young company credibility. But to get that credibility and greenlights for more television series, they have to demonstrate they have writers who can deliver top quality scripts. And that's where I come in.

I've written a couple of scripts for television. But I want more. I want much more.

A few years later, as Bud Fox would wait to be shown into Gordon Gekko's offices in Wall Street, he looks into a mirror and says, "Well, life all comes down to a few moments. This is one of them." Jean and Andy think they are rolling the dice by bringing this young, relatively untried television writer into the offices of one of the three most powerful network executives in Children's Entertainment. But they are wrong. They aren't rolling the dice. The dice have already been rolled, and the dice have already come up 'seven' before we even walk into Judy Price's office because Judy has read my two scripts ,even though they're for a competing network...and she loves them.

"Jackie-poo", indeed.

I have arrived.

Jack Olesker's career in the entertainment industry spans over four decades. He has served as a story editor in L.A. as well as president of a motion picture and television company in Chennai, India. His writing ranges from Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, Care Bears and Hello Kitty's Furry Tale Theater to documentaries and horror novels and murder mysteries for adults.

HOROSCOPE

JANUARY 16-22, 2025

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

It is important to listen to your intuition this week, as the energy is being directed towards your career and inner world, giving you the opportunity to bring your dreamier ambitions to life. Pay attention to subtle social ques and you will know when it's the right time to make things happen.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

This is a wonderful time to get out and meet people. Follow your inner desire to explore and talk to people. You can expect a surprise encounter that will get your creative juices flowing. Ask questions. Inquire and you will find what you are looking for. Good vibes are out there for you this week.

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

This is the time to harness your innovative talents and original perspectives and go for the opportunity to showcase them when it does this week. Present yourself in a way that integrates your authentic self with a higher purpose. Think stewardship and the honoring spiritual commitments.

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

The energy coming your way is all about standing out and presenting yourself in a new and vibrant way but it is important you embrace the art of subtlety and restraint as you promenade through the week; be sensitive to changing conditions and move accordingly.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

This is the week to get a handle on your impulses and reactionary tendencies. That way you can really be part of something and intermingle your talents with like minded people. Collaborations and stewing ideas with coworkers will bring some solid results now; think team player.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

You will be blessed with foresight and divine encouragement this week. This is the time to go with the flow in your relationships and collaborations. Trust in the divine flow of inspiration and happenings. Look for validation that only comes from serendipity. Homework read Three Princes of Serendip.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

Sometime sit is better to keep the things you are doing to better yourself to yourself and this is that time. Think subterfuge and maneuvering with out creating attention. The ability to problem-solve and strategize encompasses the ability to believe impossible things; which is better done before breakfast.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

You will be blessed with that certain sparkle and aura this week and will have the opportunity to showcase your creative talents and visions. A very positive vibe but one that requires a certain amount of secrecy and caution. Think stealth for the wealth, undercover for the lover.

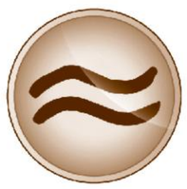
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

You have some surprises coming in this week. Be prepared for the opportunity to join your imagination with your innovative abilities by redecorating or redesigning your home and living space. There will be opportunities to make things flow and operate in a more frugal and simplistic way.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

This week is ripe with the potential of understanding valuable information and the ability to put it to good use. That means keeping your eyes and ears open, while keeping your mouth shut. Pay attention to subtle ques and keep a poker face; you'll know when to seize the moment.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



As you are engulfed in the flow of energy this week embrace the concept of "The lonely genius". They are scrupulous, yet honest. Free of social burdens and validation because they can see beyond to the immortal contributions their actions will ultimately have. They walk alone.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

The networks and pathways to seeing the bare essentials are very clear for you this week. Use this openness and reception of those around you to it's fullest by expressing yourself and sharing your unique and original perspectives on public situations and social happenings; be that trusted and reliable source.

The training of children is a profession, where we must know how to waste time in order to save it. — *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

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Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

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			4	5		3		
6	4				1			2
4	5				7			
				2				6
	3					8		
3			5				8	
8	1	2						5
								7

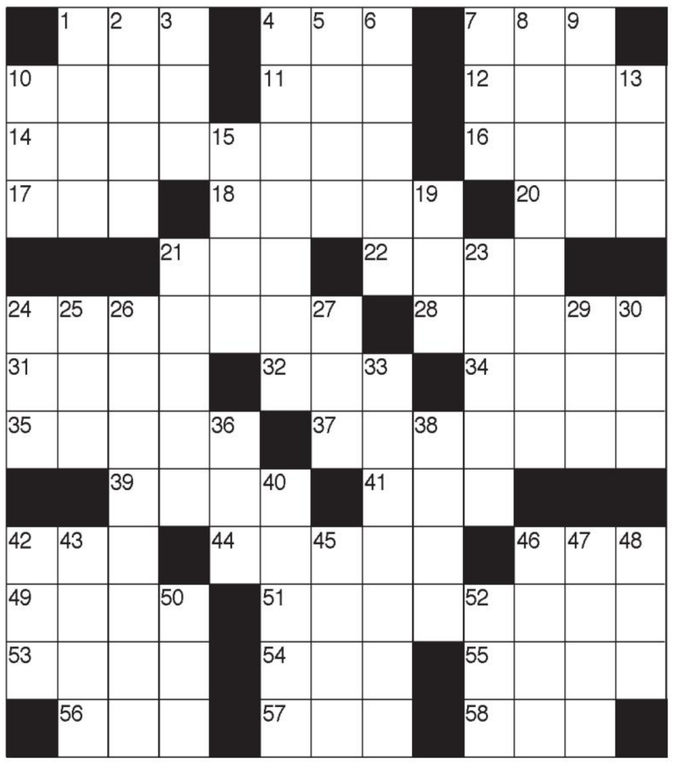
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Limited (abbr.)
4 Bachelor of Engineering in Mines (abbr.)
7 Atl. Coast Conference (abbr.)
10 Agricultural establishment
11 Grape
12 Fahrenheit (abbr.)
14 Large number
16 Silly smile
17 Irregular moving part
18 SW Alaskan native
20 Old Provencal (abbr.)
21 Abatement
22 Legal
24 Destroyed
28 Loose
31 Few (pref.)
32 Wish undone
34 Broad structural basin
35 Clemenceau's nickname
37 Patient
39 Den
41 Spread to dry hay
42 Master of Science in Engineering (abbr.)
44 Oriental country
46 Queen's bishop's pawn (abbr.)
49 Eight (Ital.)
51 Exclusive possession
53 Insane (arch.)
54 Adjective-forming (suf.)
55 Highest point
56 Dry (pref.)
57 Ike
58 Son of Ra

DOWN

1 Byron poem
2 Prune
3 Doctor of Modern Languages (abbr.)
4 Constructor
5 Bacchanalian cry
6 Siberian wild cat
7 Afghanistan (abbr.)
8 Spree
9 Nick
10 Federal Trade Commission (abbr.)
13 Royal Naval Reserve (abbr.)
15 Language (abbr.)
19 Egyptian god of the sky
21 Tidal bore
23 Toward center
24 Lose freshness
25 Adopted son of Mohammed
26 Play
27 Driving under the influence (abbr.)
29 Hebrew judge
30 Youngster
33 Agreement
36 Comparative ending
38 Official negation
40 Suited to the occasion
42 Master of Hounds (abbr.)
43 Hades river
45 Cohere
46 19th Hebrew letter
47 Blue (Fr.)
48 Church box
50 Across (poet.)
52 Steps in ballet



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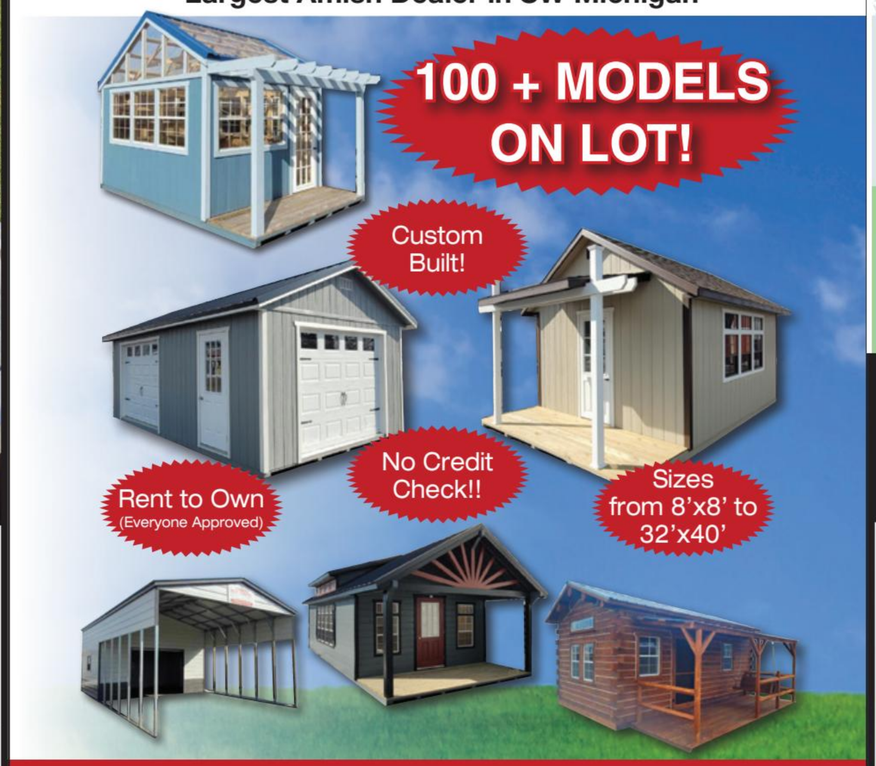

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* EPIC-MRA 2011

MPA MICHIGAN PRESS ASSOCIATION

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PET OF THE WEEK

FROSTY

Frosty might take some time to warm up to you, but he can't wait to live in your home. He is a little younger than five months old, and weighs around 35 pounds, neutered and his vaccinations are up-to-date. Frosty will wiggle, and can be overjoyed to be in your arms. He just wants to be trusted, and he is friendly with cats. Frosty would be good with teenagers, and your lap with plenty of snuggles. Treats and calmness could make Frosty a little less "frosty", and your favorite home addition during these cold months.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Please join our New Buffalo American Legion Women's Auxiliary in collecting donations for Blue Star Mothers of America. They are shipping care packages overseas to our active-duty members.

Examples of what they could use are: Toothbrushes/paste, floss, disposable razors, shaving cream in a squeeze tube, eye drops, hand lotion, chap stick,
band aids, sunscreen, insect repellent, playing cards, word search, sudoku, and puzzle books, footballs, dominos, frisbees.

We are accepting monetary donations as well for the shipping costs. Checks for monetary donations can be made to:
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Please drop off all donations by February 15th to:
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Our Veterans appreciate you as do we.

‘Princess’ event raises funds for beloved teacher, community member

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Golden crowns that were atop people’s heads, streamers and other royal decorations abounded at the Three Oaks American Legion Post 204 Friday, Jan. 17

And it was no wonder: That night, guests who crowded the legion were celebrating Shelly Taylor, who Debbie Schutt described as a being a real-life princess

“Tonight is ‘Pasta with a Princess’ because Shelly is a living Disney princess – she’s always smiling, she loves cats,” Schutt, who organized the fundraiser, said.

Funds from the event, which included a full-fledged pasta bar, desserts and a silent auction, went toward costs for Taylor’s continuing rehabilitation from an accident last November.

On Nov. 17, Taylor fell off a ladder and landed on her stomach, which resulted in her breaking three vertebrae in her back. She went to Franciscan Health before being airlifted by helicopter to the University of Chicago to have surgery on her spine. Taylor stood there for 17 days, 13 of them being the Intensive Care Unit and four days on the regular floor, before going to Shirley Ryan AbilityLab for three weeks for rehabilitation.

While she’s now home, Schutt said that Taylor must navigate the bilevel house of her and her husband, Todd while being 100 percent wheelchair bound. Three days a week, she travels to Homewood, Illinois, to a different Shirely Ryan facility.

“So, on top of medical bills, on top of therapy bills, on top of having to make their house livable for her, she’s still going to Chicago for therapy,” Schutt said.

A second-grade teacher at River Valley Elementary School, Taylor has taught at the River Valley School District for 14 years, having spent the first two years of her teaching career at Trinity Lutheran in Sawyer. She’s also given back to the community in other ways, having served for four years as a member of the Chikaming Township Park Board. Her husband is also the police chief for Chikaming Township.

Taylor was born and raised in Three Oaks, having graduated from River Valley High School in 2002. Two of her sons graduated from there, with another one currently a junior.

“So, they’re very, very, well known in the community and they’re always doing something so this was just the slightest thing maybe we can give back to her and help them through this,” Schutt, whose daughter is a second grader at River Valley but not in Taylor’s class, said.

Schutt said that Heather Whitlow has also helped her organize the event. The community had given donations to the silent auction as well as provided all the food.

“We haven’t had to provide anything, it’s all donations and volunteers - we have probably 100 or more just donations for the silent auction alone and everybody immediately signed up and filled the sign ups (for food) and I even added more, and it filled up again,” she said.

These days, Taylor said she’s been feeling “pretty good.”

“I’m just trying to get stronger and hoping to get back on my feet but I’m doing good,” she said.

Already, Taylor celebrated one milestone in her recovery process: She made it home by Christmas.

“That was my goal – they said I’ve got six weeks, and I was like, ‘No, I’m not going to miss Christmas’ and I worked so hard to be home and I got home…It was through hard work,” she said.

While she can’t teach right now, Taylor has ensured that she’s been able to check up on her students and has been trying to visit her classroom once a week to see and visit with them.

“Having grown up in the Three Oaks and River Valley area,” Taylor said she’s always felt a deep connection to the area.

“I love the area and thought it’d be awesome to teach where I went,” she said.

Gazing around the crowded legion at that night’s fundraiser, Taylor knows that she made “the right decision to put down roots in the area.”

“I am overwhelmed, this is amazing…The community has been amazing, and I feel so uplifted by everyone - it really helps,” she said.

A giveback dinner will be held at Plank’s Tavern, located inside the Inn at Harbor Shores, at 800 Whitwam Drive in St. Joseph, Michigan, from 4-9 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 26, where 50% of total sales from this evening will go directly to Taylor and her family. Donations can also be made by visiting Taylor’s GoFundMe page.

Guests crowd the legion

Silent auction items line a table

Guests enjoy dessert at the legion

Shelly Taylor with husband Todd, sister Renee Sells and mom Barb Reese

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